The Railway line from Cherry Tree to Chorley was 7 miles long. Originally built to transport coal from the Wigan coalfield to the mills of East Lancashire, without the need to go the long way around via Preston.

Work started on the line on the 2nd August 1866 and included major civil engineering works over the River Rodderlesworth between Fensicowles and Abbey Village. The line was opened on the 1st November 1869 and was owned and run jointly by the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway and the LNWR (London North Western Railway).

It was built by William Hanson at a cost of £530,000, around £34 million in today's money.

Passenger service was withdrawn in 1960 and the line was eventually dismantled in 1967 with the link to Chorley being severed on the 10th November 1968 with the demolition of the viaduct over the Leeds-Liverpool Canal at Botany Bay. Brinscall Station was demolished and Withnell Station was sold off. The land was acquired by Chorley Borough Council in 1971.

The railway cutting provides a valuable bird rich habitat due to the dense cover of the woodland and scrub offering an excellent nesting and rearing territory. Keep a look and listen out for warblers, flycatchers, long-tailed tits, nuthatches, song thrush and chiffchaff, all seen locally here.

The abundance of the berries and invertebrates allow the birds to forage for food all year round.

Withnell is a place for people and wildlife.

Please follow the visitor’s code:
- Enjoy the Nature Reserve and respect to wildlife.
- Keep to the footpaths.
- Keep dogs on a lead and under close control at all times.
- Take your litter home and clean up after your dog.
- No horse riding or motorcycling.